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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 201103Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6750
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH 3972
RUEHHS/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001969

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, DRL/AWH, CA/OCS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CASC](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN OVER ARREST OF AMCIT
ACTIVIST

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1.(SBU) Summary: The Ambassador has called the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and written to the Vice Minister of Public Security (MPS) to raise our concerns about the reported arrest of at least one AmCit and fellow activists in HCMC November 17. Text of the Ambassador's letter to MPS is contained in Para 8. We are seeking consular access, which is expected to be granted in the coming days.
End summary.

2.(SBU) Various Vietnamese-American sources in the United States reported the arrests by Vietnamese authorities of two American citizens: Dr. NGUYEN, Quoc Quan (Sacramento, California) and Mr. TRUONG, Leon Van Ba (Hawaii), plus the arrest of one French citizen: Ms. NGUYEN, Thi Thanh Van, one Thai citizen: Mr. SOMSAK, Khunmi, and two Vietnamese citizens: Mr. Nguyen The Kiem and Mr. Nguyen The Vu.

3. (SBU) Ambassador Michalak called the French and Thai Ambassadors to share information on the case. The French Ambassador said they were making similar protests with the MFA, while the Thai Ambassador said he had tasked his Consul General in HCMC to look into the matter.

4.(SBU) The GVN has informed us it has one American under detention for "terrorism" charges, but has not commented in detail about the case as yet. According to U.S. based sources, these individuals were producing printed materials calling for the peaceful overthrow of the current Vietnamese Government, complete with instructions on how to organize and carry out peaceful mass protests.

5.(SBU) On November 19, ConGen HCMC began investigating, and we can now confirm that Amcit Leon Truong was arrested. We are seeking confirmation of the status of Nguyen, Quoc Quan. We have formally requested consular access, which is expected to be granted in the coming days. MPS informed ConGen HCMC that they have not detained Nguyen, Quoc Quan. Post is currently trying to determine Mr. Nguyen's whereabouts. We do not have a Privacy Act Waiver from Mr. Truong or Mr. Nguyen, so we cannot make any public statements about their situation.

6. (SBU) On the basis of available information, including a stream of appeals from ethnic Vietnamese in the United States, we have determined that the one Amcit arrested, and probably the others, are being held for non-violent political acts. The Ambassador raised deep concerns about the situation in a November 20 call to Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh. VFM Minh said he did not have much information but that he understood the individuals have not been charged yet. If they violated Vietnamese law, they would be charged - if they did not, they would be freed. Minh said

he would follow up with MPS and give the Ambassador an update.

17. (SBU) The Ambassador also raised the issue in a November 20 letter to Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong. Text of that letter follows below.

8.(SBU) Begin text of letter:

Mr. Vice Minister:

I am writing to express my concern about reports of the November 17 arrest of several individuals including at least one American citizen, Mr. Leon Truong, in Ho Chi Minh City. Our Mission consular officers in Ho Chi Minh City have requested access to any American citizens in custody and we will greatly appreciate your help in facilitating that.

From what we understand at this point, the actions taken against these individuals appear to be designed to silence the peaceful expression of their political views. If this is indeed the case, we protest these arrests and call for the immediate release of those involved.

As we have said repeatedly, the United States supports the territorial integrity of Vietnam and does not support violent action against the government of Vietnam. We believe, however, that improving the protection of human rights, including freedom of peaceful expression of opinion, is in Vietnam's interests and will ultimately make the country stronger.

I know you are aware of Vietnam's international obligations to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of its people. I have appreciated our frank and fruitful discussions on these and other issues of mutual concern and appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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Michael W. Michalak

His Excellency
Colonel General Dr. Nguyen Van Huong,
Vice Minister of Public Security
Hanoi, Vietnam.

Cc: Pham Binh Ming, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs

MICHALAK